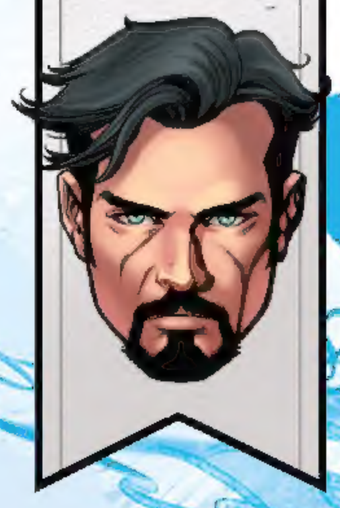
MARVEL LEGACY

LOKI: SORCERER SUPREME

382



DOCTOR STRANGE

CATES
WALTA
BELLAIRE

STEPHEN STRANGE
Veterinarian

STEPHEN STRANGE WAS A PREEMINENT SURGEON UNTIL A CAR ACCIDENT DAMAGED THE NERVES IN HIS HANDS. HIS EGO DROVE HIM TO SCOUR THE GLOBE FOR A MIRACLE CURE. INSTEAD, HE FOUND A MYSTERIOUS WIZARD CALLED THE ANCIENT ONE WHO TAUGHT HIM MAGIC AND THAT THERE ARE THINGS IN THIS WORLD BIGGER THAN HIMSELF. THESE LESSONS ENABLED STEPHEN TO BECOME THE SORCERER SUPREME, EARTH'S FIRST DEFENSE AGAINST ALL MANNER OF MAGICAL THREATS. HIS PATIENTS CALL HIM...

DOCTOR STRANGE

LAST TIME...

HE'S STILL PRACTICING MEDICINE (IN A WAY), BUT DOCTOR STRANGE IS NO LONGER SORCERER SUPREME. THAT TITLE WAS TRANSFERRED TO ASGARDIAN GOD OF MISCHIEF AND LIES, LOKI LAUFEYSON, IN A TOURNAMENT STRANGE IS RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS. HOWEVER, HE RECOGNIZES THE OUTCOME AS LEGITIMATE. LOKI EVEN HAS ADVANTAGES AS SORCERER SUPREME: STRANGE'S POWER WAS AT ITS NADIR AFTER THE RECENT WAR ON MAGIC, AND LOKI'S DIVINITY APPARENTLY ALLOWS HIM TO CAST SPELLS WITHOUT ANY COST. AND THOUGH WONG HAS LEFT THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM, STRANGE'S APPRENTICE AND FRIEND, ZELMA STANTON, IS THERE AIDING LOKI AND ANYONE IN NEED OF MYSTICAL ASSISTANCE.

STILL, THE REST OF THE MAGICAL COMMUNITY IS SUSPICIOUS, AND SCARLET WITCH HAS CHIDED STRANGE FOR HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE NEW STATUS QUO.

"LOKI: **SORCERER SUPREME**" PART TWO

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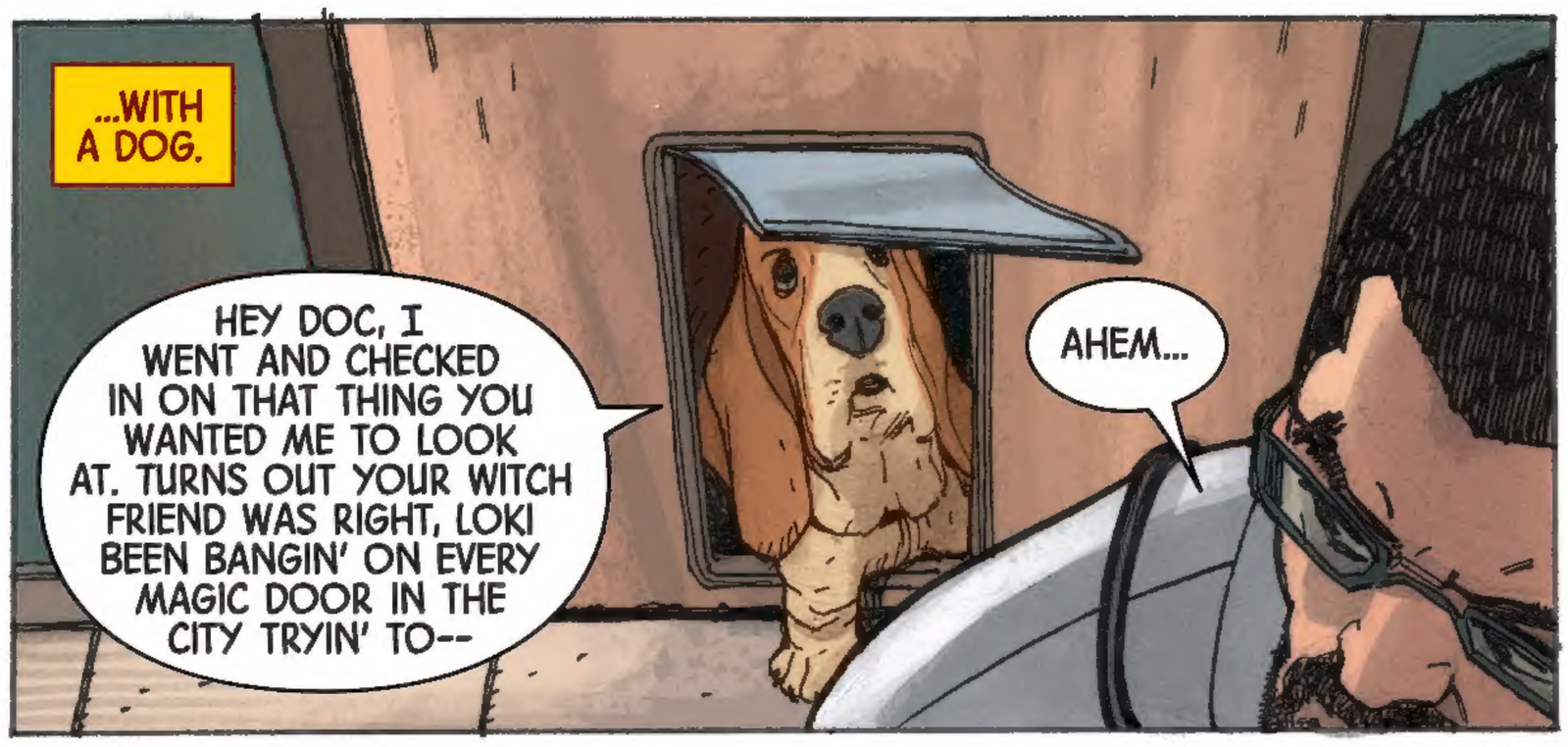
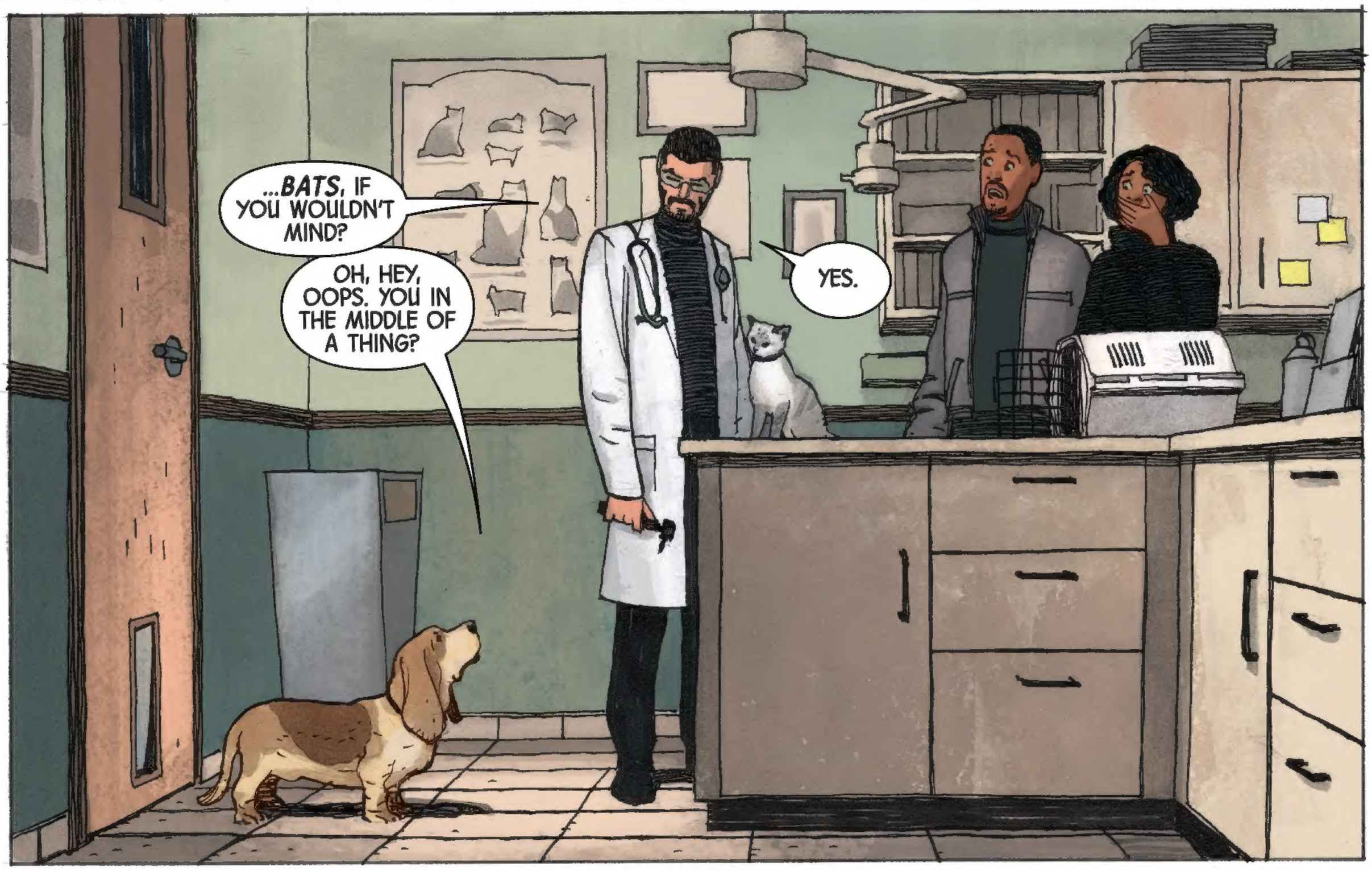
I SHOULDN'T BE HERE.
I MADE A PROMISE TO THE MAN AT THE TOP OF THIS MOUNTAIN THAT I WOULD NEVER COME TO HIM FOR HELP.
TECHNICALLY SPEAKING, HE DOESN'T EVEN EXIST.
AND THE ODDS ARE STRONG HE'LL KILL ME FOR EVEN ATTEMPTING TO MAKE CONTACT...
(MUCH LESS ASKING HIM TO JOIN ME IN A FIGHT AGAINST A GOD.)
SO, WHY AM I CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN JUST TO GET BEATEN TO DEATH?
WELL, I HAD A REALLY, REALLY BAD DAY TODAY.

LIKE MOST STORIES WORTH TELLING, THIS ONE BEGAN, AND ENDED...
ANIMAL HOSPITAL


...WITH A DOG.
HEY DOC, I WENT AND CHECKED IN ON THAT THING YOU WANTED ME TO LOOK AT. TURNS OUT YOUR WITCH FRIEND WAS RIGHT, LOKI BEEN BANGIN' ON EVERY MAGIC DOOR IN THE CITY TRYIN' TO--
AHEM...

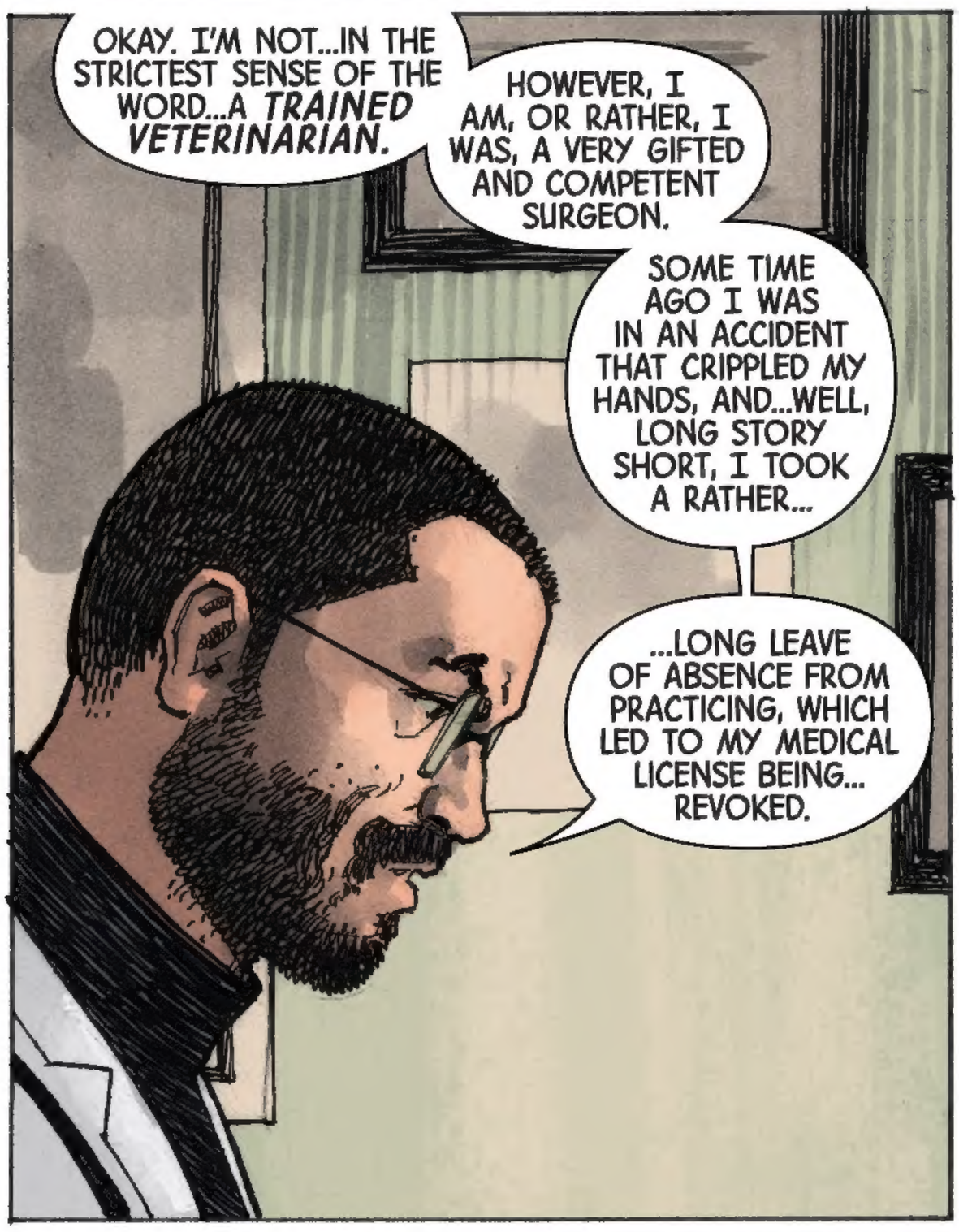

...BATS, IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND?
OH, HEY, OOPS. YOU IN THE MIDDLE OF A THING?
YES.

OH, DANG... YOU AIN'T TOLD 'EM YET, HUH?
NO. NO, I HAVE NOT.
WELL, THAT IS ON ME. SORRY, FOLKS.

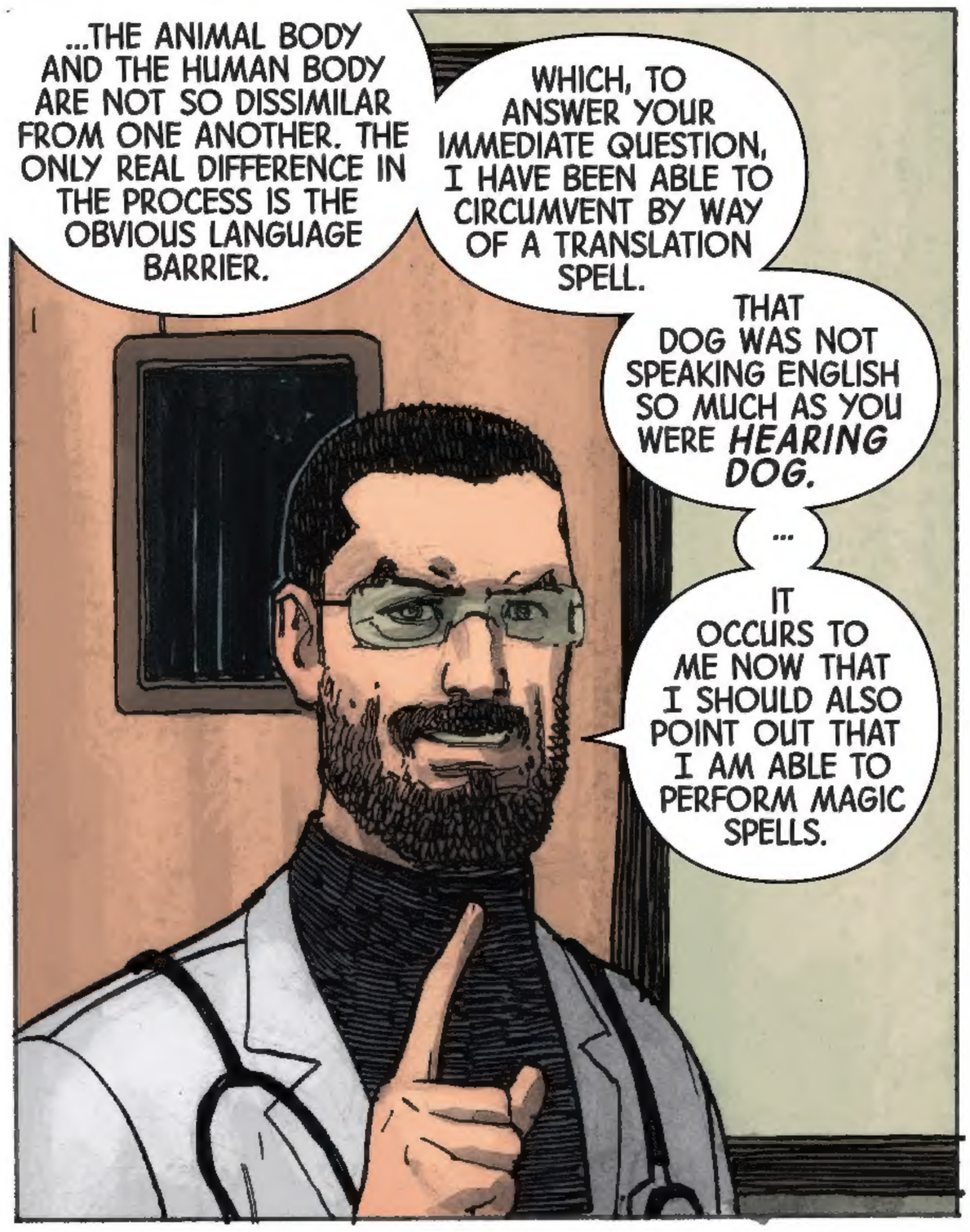
I'LL BE IN YOUR OFFICE.
VERY GOOD. THANK YOU, BATS.

WELL, OKAY... AS I WAS SAYING, DAISY SEEMS TO BE EXPERIENCING SOME ARTHRITIS IN HER--
ARE WE JUST NOT GOING TO TALK ABOUT THAT DOG SPEAKING ENGLISH?

→SIGH←


OKAY. I'M NOT...IN THE STRICTEST SENSE OF THE WORD...A *TRAINED VETERINARIAN.*
HOWEVER, I AM, OR RATHER, I WAS, A VERY GIFTED AND COMPETENT SURGEON.
SOME TIME AGO I WAS IN AN ACCIDENT THAT CRIPPLED MY HANDS, AND...WELL, LONG STORY SHORT, I TOOK A RATHER...
...LONG LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM PRACTICING, WHICH LED TO MY MEDICAL LICENSE BEING... REVOKED.

SO, I OPENED THIS PLACE. NOW, I KNOW IT MAY SOUND... UNUSUAL...
BUT REALLY...


...THE ANIMAL BODY AND THE HUMAN BODY ARE NOT SO DISSIMILAR FROM ONE ANOTHER. THE ONLY REAL DIFFERENCE IN THE PROCESS IS THE OBVIOUS LANGUAGE BARRIER.
WHICH, TO ANSWER YOUR IMMEDIATE QUESTION, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CIRCUMVENT BY WAY OF A TRANSLATION SPELL.
THAT DOG WAS NOT SPEAKING ENGLISH SO MUCH AS YOU WERE *HEARING DOG.*
...
IT OCCURS TO ME NOW THAT I SHOULD ALSO POINT OUT THAT I AM ABLE TO PERFORM MAGIC SPELLS.

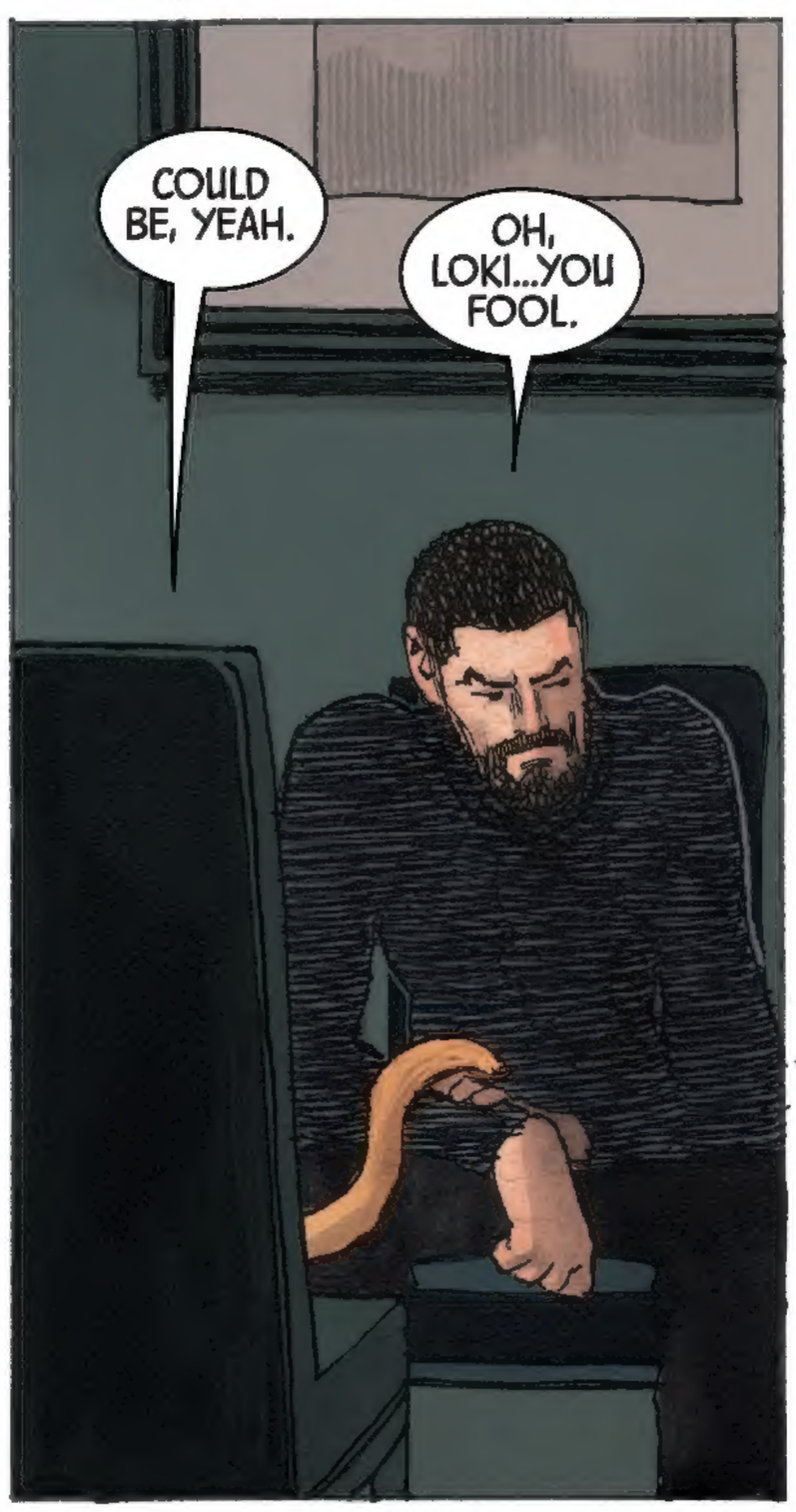
I HOPE THAT ANSWERS YOUR QUESTION.

HOW'D THAT GO?
HOW DO YOU THINK IT WENT? THEY TOOK THEIR CAT AND RAN HOME.
DOC, *YOU GOTTA* START LYING TO PEOPLE.

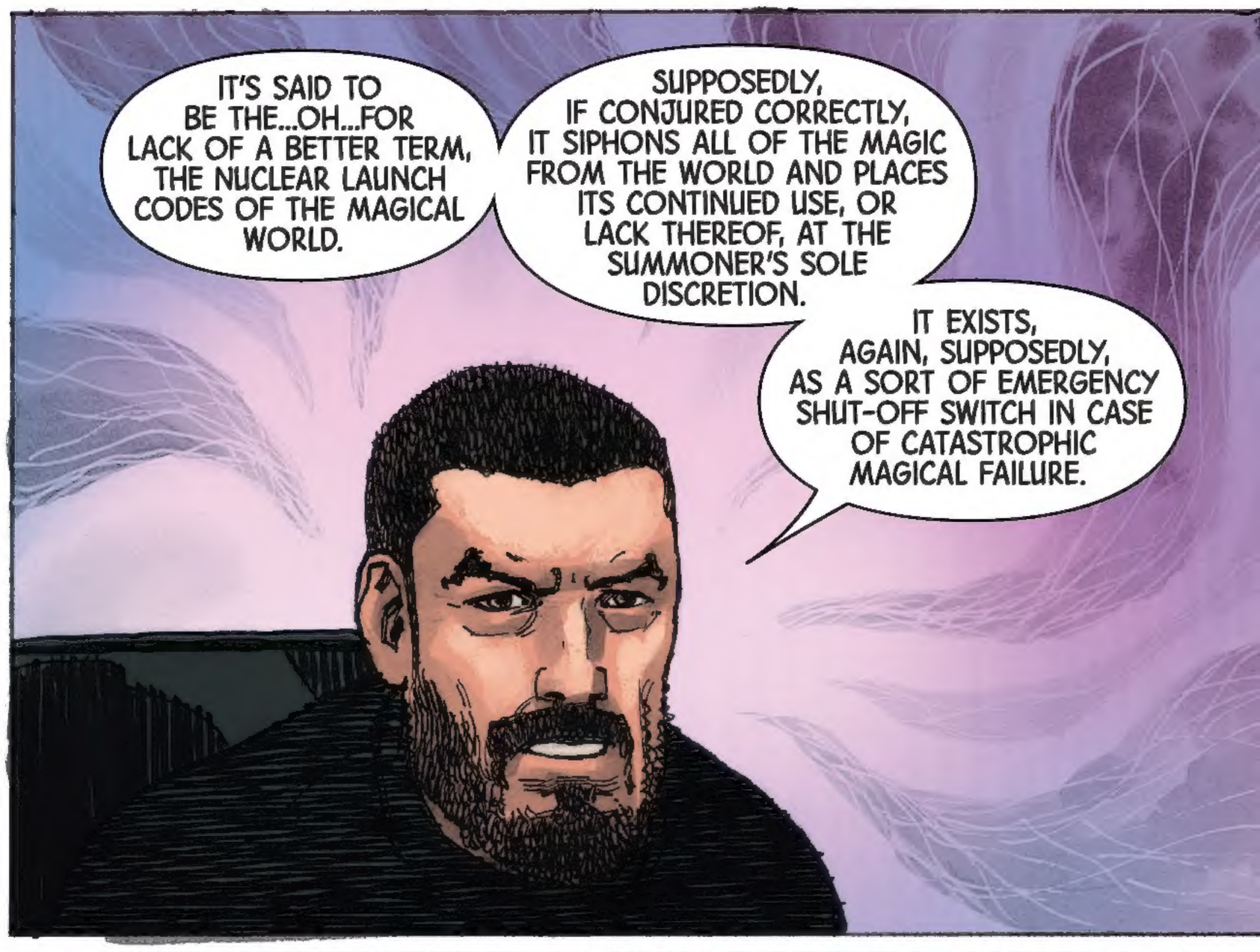
I'M NOT OVERLY FOND OF LIARS, BATS.

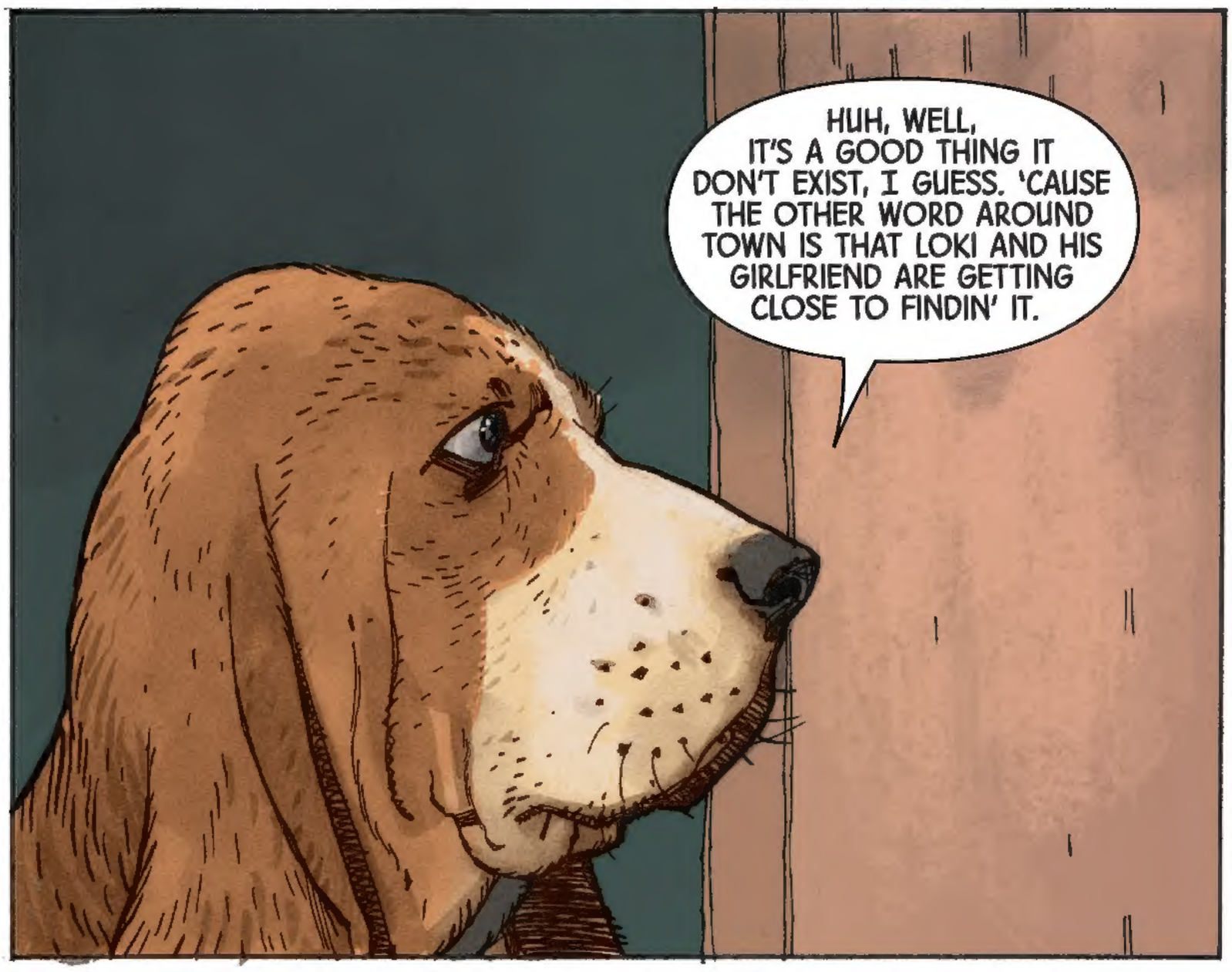
RIGHT, RIGHT. SO HEY, YOU WANNA HEAR WHAT I DUG UP IN THE CLANDESTINE SPYING MISSION YOU SENT ME ON?
YES. WHAT DID YOU FIND?

SO, TURNS OUT LOKI IS HUNTING ALL OVER HELL'S HALF ACRE FOR SOME KINDA SPELL CALLED "THE EXILE OF SINGSONG" OR SOME--
SINGHSOON?


COULD BE, YEAH.
OH, LOKI...YOU FOOL.

WHY? WHAT IS IT?
IT'S →SIGH← A...LEGEND. A MYTH. DOESN'T EXIST.


IT'S SAID TO BE THE...OH...FOR LACK OF A BETTER TERM, THE NUCLEAR LAUNCH CODES OF THE MAGICAL WORLD.
SUPPOSEDLY, IF CONJURED CORRECTLY, IT SIPHONS ALL OF THE MAGIC FROM THE WORLD AND PLACES ITS CONTINUED USE, OR LACK THEREOF, AT THE SUMMONER'S SOLE DISCRETION.
IT EXISTS, AGAIN, SUPPOSEDLY, AS A SORT OF EMERGENCY SHUT-OFF SWITCH IN CASE OF CATASTROPHIC MAGICAL FAILURE.


HUH, WELL, IT'S A GOOD THING IT DON'T EXIST, I GUESS. 'CAUSE THE OTHER WORD AROUND TOWN IS THAT LOKI AND HIS GIRLFRIEND ARE GETTING CLOSE TO FINDIN' IT.

HIS WHAT?

YEAH, THAT ZELDA GIRL. ONE YOU USED TO TRAIN OR WH--
ZELMA? ZELMA ISN'T HIS...WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT?
HEY, I'M JUST REPORTIN' THE NEWS.

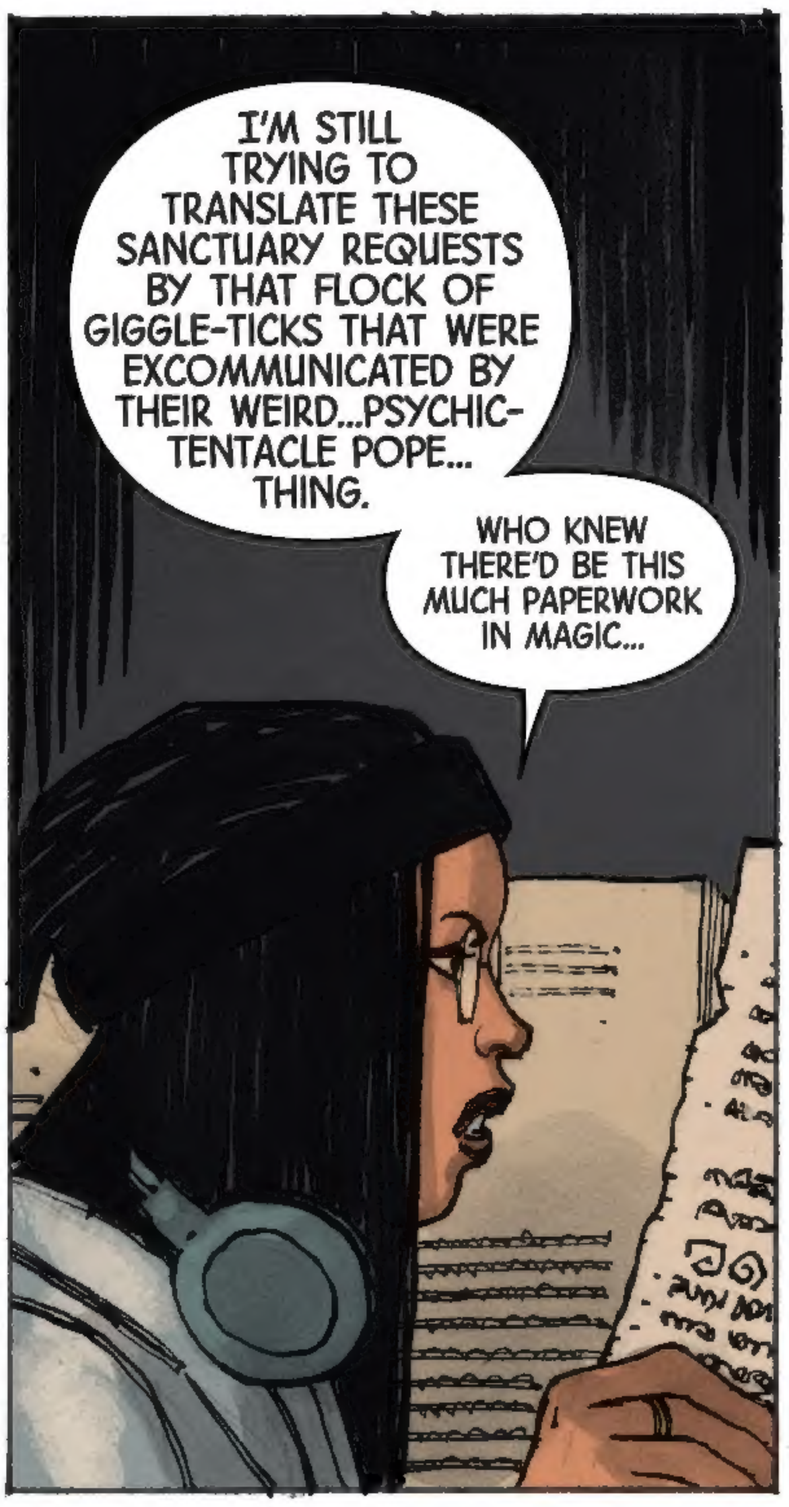
...
WHERE'S YOUR LEASH?

AGHHH!

DAMN! A THOUSAND TIMES DAMN!
WHY WOULD YOU EVEN THINK THAT WOULD WORK?
ZELMA! HEADPHONES!

OH, SORRY.
WHY WOULD YOU THINK THOSE STUPID MACHINE GUNS WOULD WORK WHEN ALL OF YOUR SPELLS AND ENCHANTED ARTIFACTS HAVEN'T BUDGED THAT DOOR IN THE SLIGHTEST?

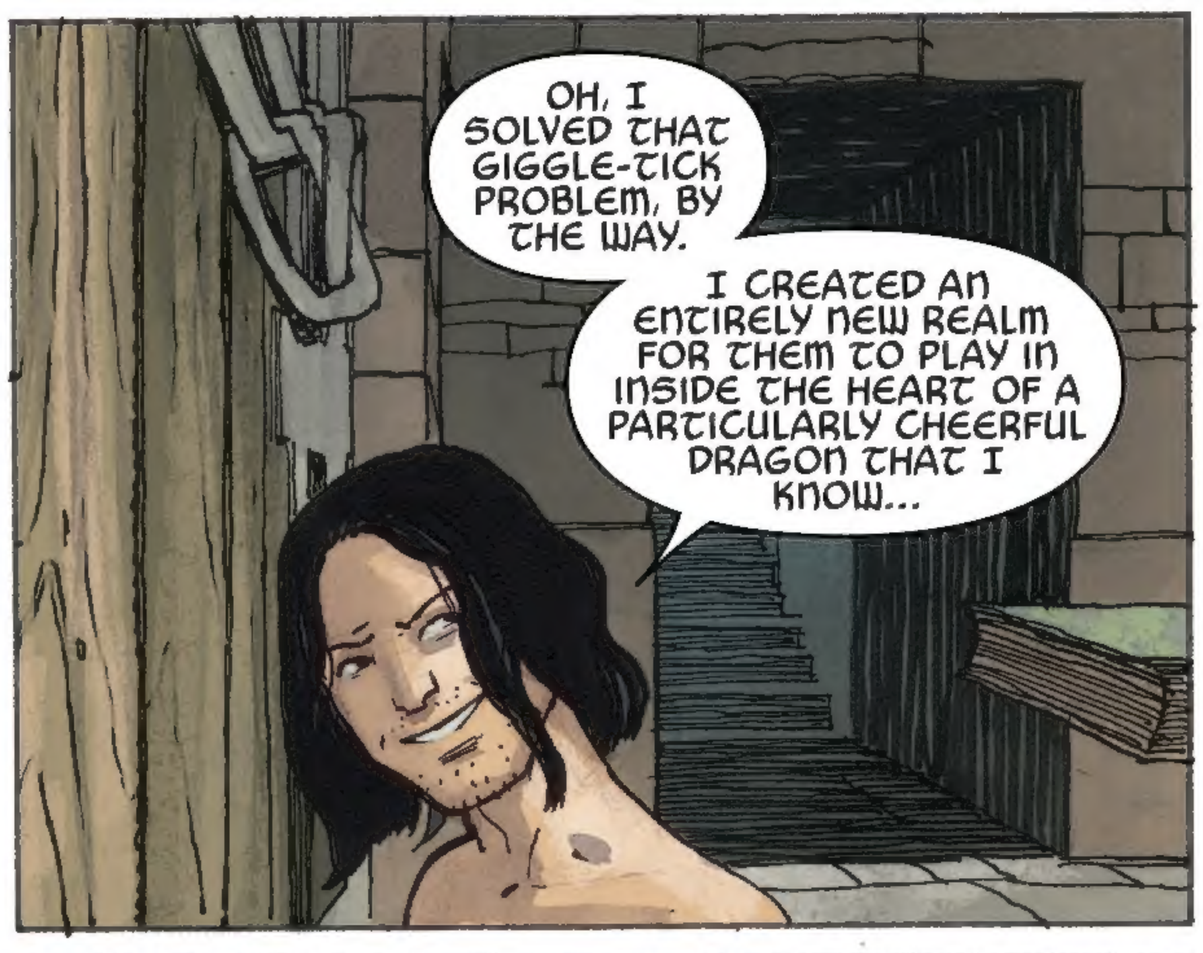
"STUPID MACHINE..." THESE ARE NO ORDINARY FIREARMS!
WHY, THESE ARE THE VERY RIFLES THAT SKURGE THE MIGHTY EXECUTIONER WIELDED IN HIS FINAL STAND AGAINST THE--
I'M SURE THEY ARE VERY COOL GUNS. BUT CAN YOU KNOCK IT OFF FOR A BIT?

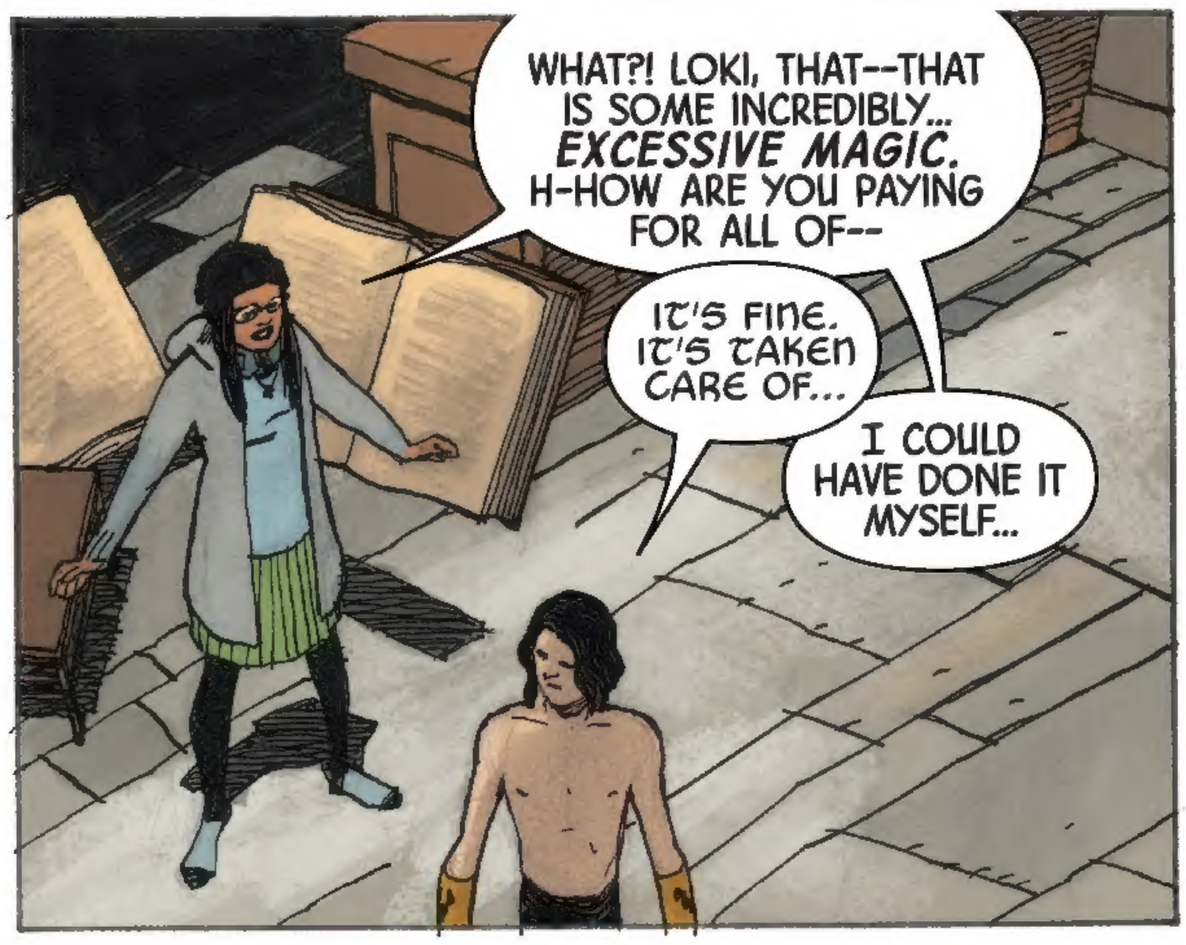

I'M STILL TRYING TO TRANSLATE THESE SANCTUARY REQUESTS BY THAT FLOCK OF GIGGLE-TICKS THAT WERE EXCOMMUNICATED BY THEIR WEIRD...PSYCHIC-TENTACLE POPE... THING.
WHO KNEW THERE'D BE THIS MUCH PAPERWORK IN MAGIC...

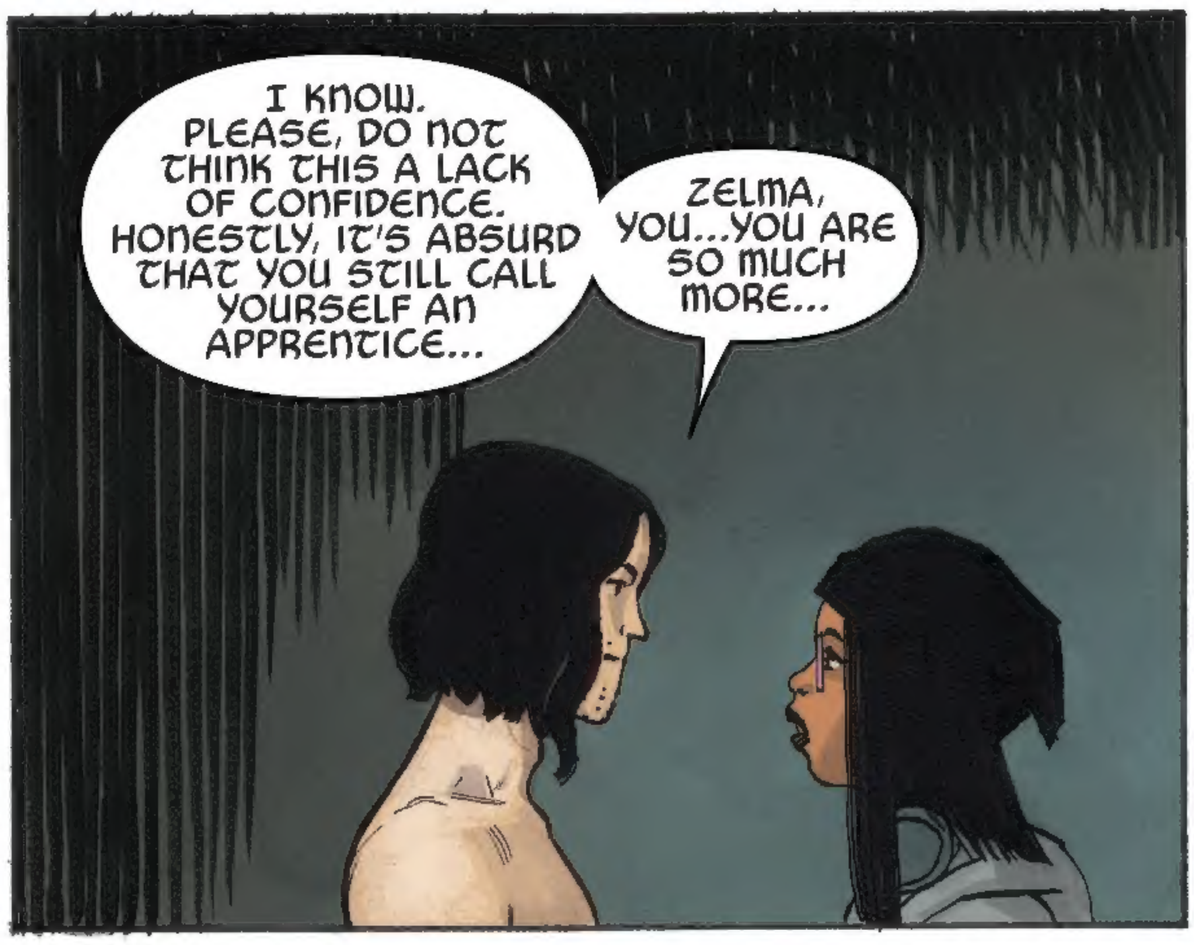
AND, YOU KNOW, I'M HAPPY TO HELP YOU, BUT FOR THE LIFE OF ME I WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND THIS OBSESSION WITH THAT DOOR OF YOURS.

I MEAN, YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW IF THAT SPELL *IS IN THERE.*
MAYBE IF YOU TOLD ME WHAT THIS SINGHSOON THING *DOES, I COULD HELP YOU FIND--*
OH, →SIGH← I KNOW I'M OBSESSING... IT'S JUST...

WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE? WHAT ELSE WOULD STEPHEN GO TO SUCH INCREDIBLE LENGTHS TO KEEP FROM ME?
I CAN FEEL ITS PULL ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS DOOR. ITS POWER IS...


OH, I SOLVED THAT GIGGLE-TICK PROBLEM, BY THE WAY.
I CREATED AN ENTIRELY NEW REALM FOR THEM TO PLAY IN INSIDE THE HEART OF A PARTICULARLY CHEERFUL DRAGON THAT I KNOW...


WHAT?! LOKI, THAT--THAT IS SOME INCREDIBLY... *EXCESSIVE MAGIC.* H-HOW ARE YOU PAYING FOR ALL OF--
IT'S FINE. IT'S TAKEN CARE OF...
I COULD HAVE DONE IT MYSELF...


I KNOW. PLEASE, DO NOT THINK THIS A LACK OF CONFIDENCE. HONESTLY, IT'S ABSURD THAT YOU STILL CALL YOURSELF AN APPRENTICE...
ZELMA, YOU...YOU ARE SO MUCH MORE...

UGH. THIS IS SO STUPID.
IT IS NOT. I'M SIMPLY WORRIED FOR A FRIEND.

OH YEAH?

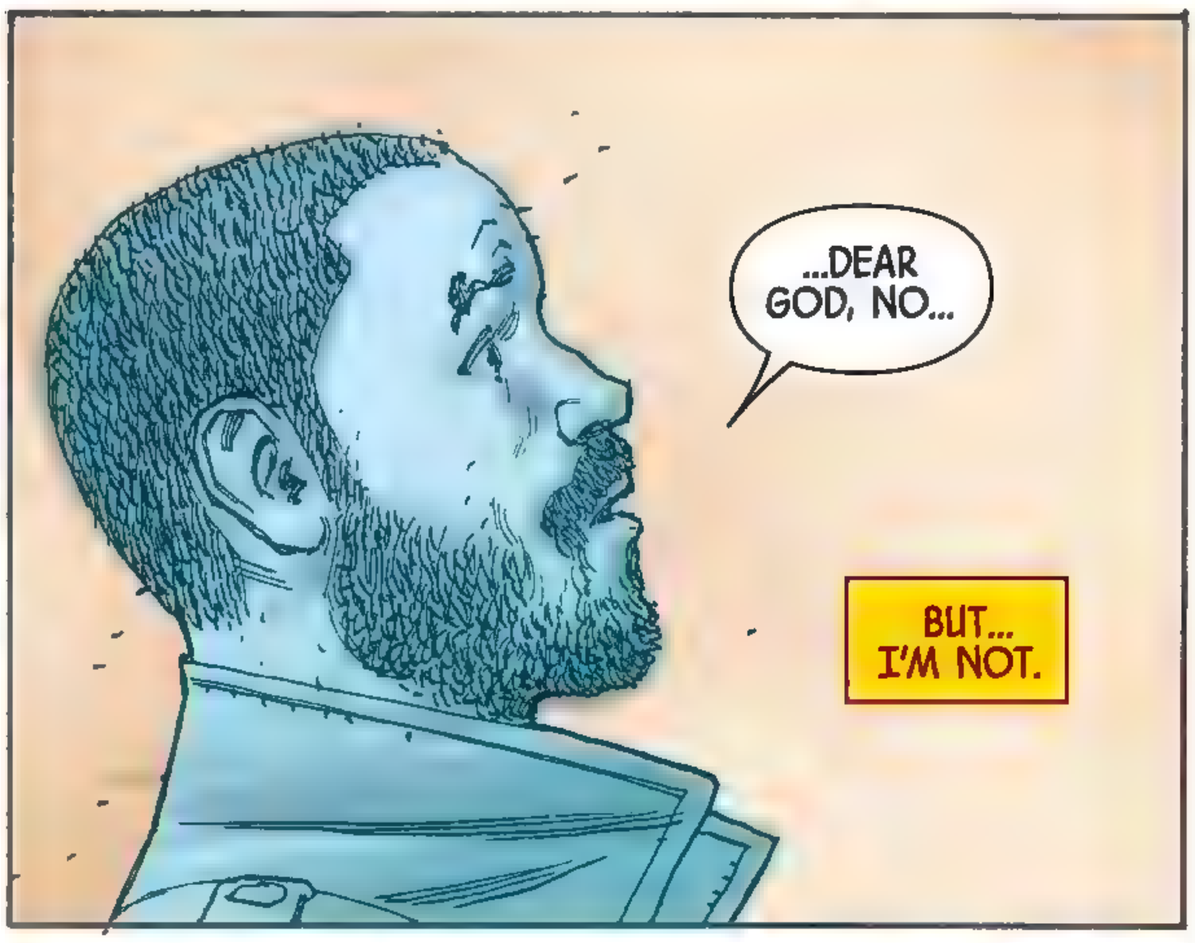
THEN HOW COME YOU AIN'T REALLY HERE?

IT'S...NOT WISE FOR ME TO BE SEEN IN THE AREA.
HEH, YOU MEAN IT AIN'T WISE FOR A CERTAIN GOD TO SEE YOU IN THE AREA, YA BIG SCAREDY CAT.
YOU'RE A VERY OLD AND VERY SICK DOG, BATS. I'M SURE YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT.
HEY...

WAIT...

I KNOW HOW THIS LOOKS.

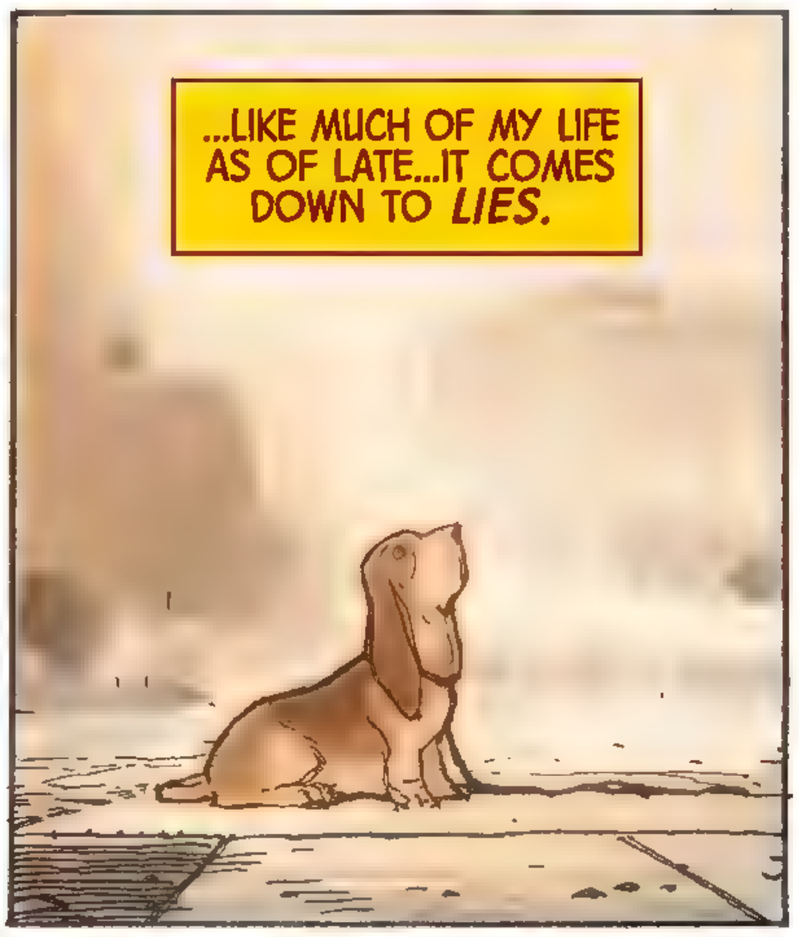
YOU THINK I'M BITTER. JEALOUS.


...DEAR GOD, NO...
BUT... I'M NOT.

I'M TERRIFIED.

OUCH. THAT'S... YEAH, THAT'S ROUGH, DOC. I MEAN, GUY TAKES YER HOUSE...YER CAPE, YER JOB...AND NOW THIS? JEEZ, I FEEL FOR YA, I REALLY...

WHY? WELL...
DOC?


...LIKE MUCH OF MY LIFE AS OF LATE...IT COMES DOWN TO *LIES.*

YOU SEE, THE EXILE OF SINGHSOON IS VERY MUCH REAL.

I ACQUIRED IT LONG AGO, AND I LOATHE THE SPELL WITH EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING.

SOMETHING THAT DANGEROUS, THAT POWERFUL...IT SHOULD NEVER BE ALLOWED IN ANYONE'S HANDS. NOT EVEN THE SORCERER SUPREME.

OVER THE YEARS, IN ORDER TO HIDE IT, AND TO ASSURE THAT I WOULD NEVER BE TEMPTED TO USE SUCH A THING...

...I HAVE...

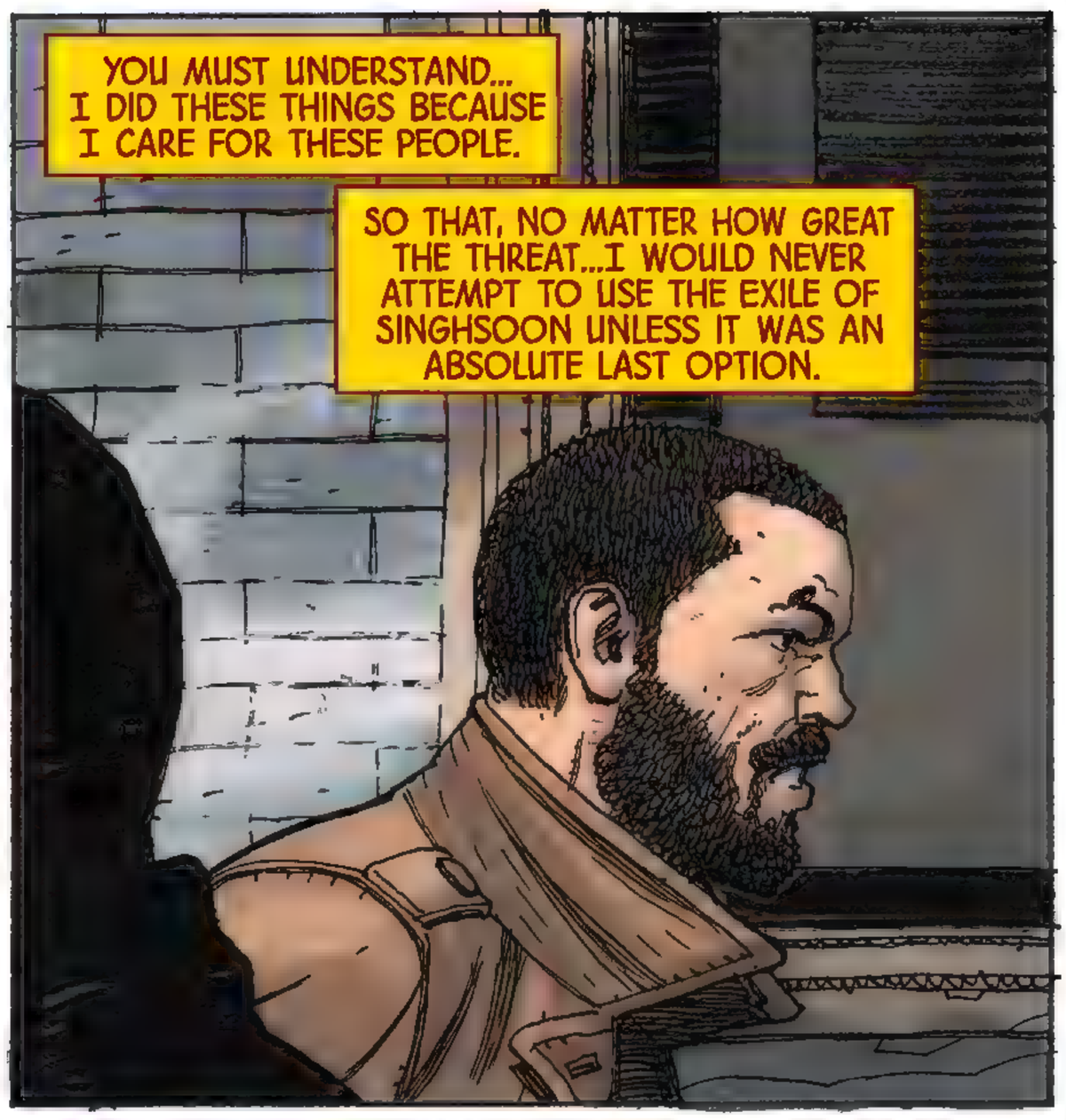
...I HAVE BOUND THE SPELL TO THE SOULS OF THOSE I CARE FOR.

NONE OF THEM HAVE EVER KNOWN.

I AM NOT PROUD OF THIS...BUT THE TIME FOR REGRET HAS PASSED.

BECAUSE NOW, WELL...

...I'LL GIVE YOU ONE GUESS AS TO ITS CURRENT LOCATION...
WHAT... WHAT WAS THAT FOR?
I... HONESTLY, I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S COME OVER ME.

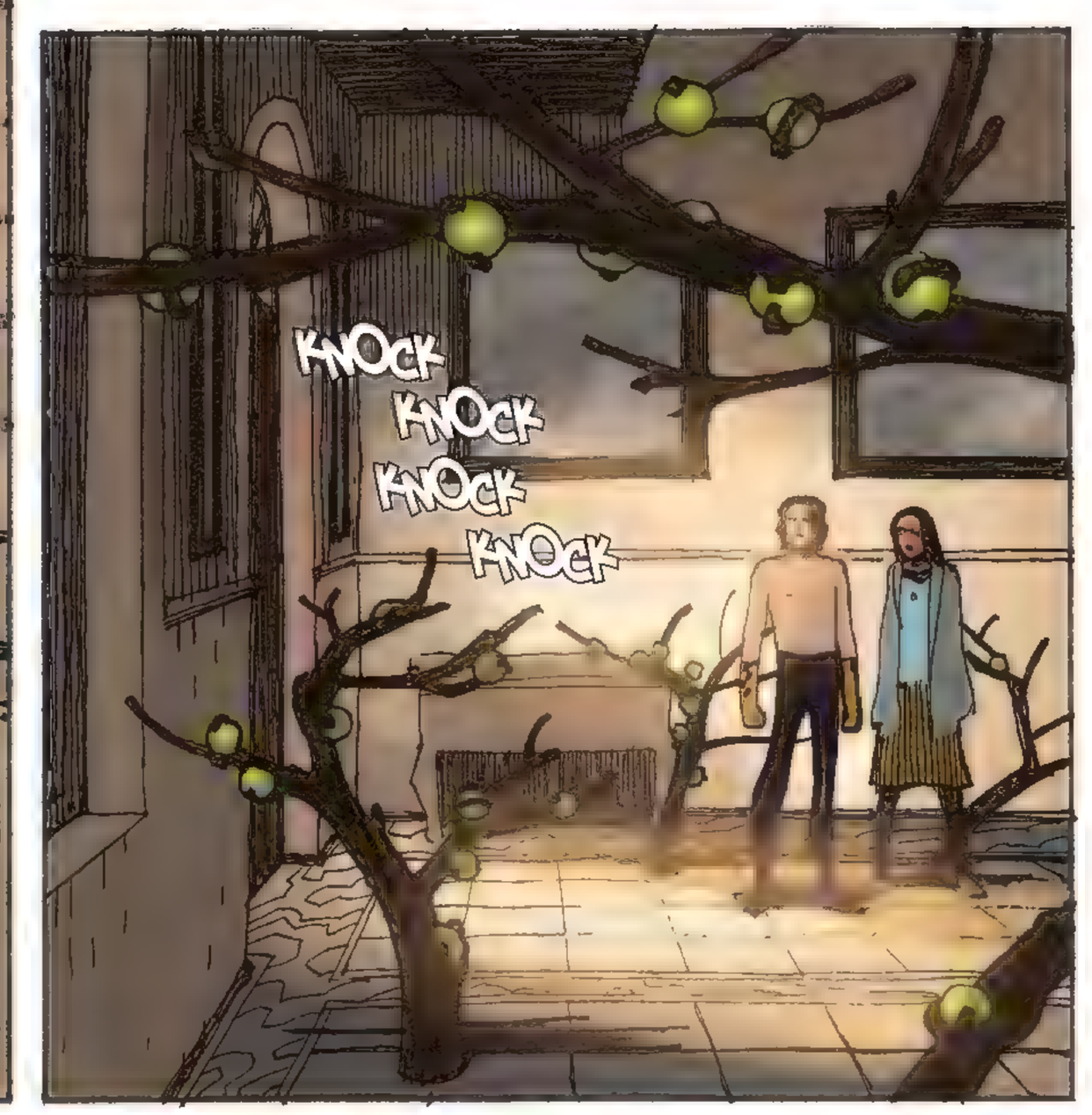

YOU MUST UNDERSTAND... I DID THESE THINGS BECAUSE I CARE FOR THESE PEOPLE.
SO THAT, NO MATTER HOW GREAT THE THREAT...I WOULD NEVER ATTEMPT TO USE THE EXILE OF SINGHSOON UNLESS IT WAS AN ABSOLUTE LAST OPTION.

REMOVING A SPELL BOUND TO A SOUL IS A DELICATE, SURGICAL PROCEDURE.
IF PERFORMED INCORRECTLY, THE SOUL CAN BE TORN.
THERE'S SOMETHING... WONDERFULLY DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU, ZELMA STANTON...

DESTROYED.
I JUST... I CAN'T PUT MY FINGER ON IT.

IF LOKI AND ZELMA ARE... ROMANTICALLY ENTWINED...
...IF SHE TRULY OPENS HER HEART TO HIM...

...IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HE SENSES IT...



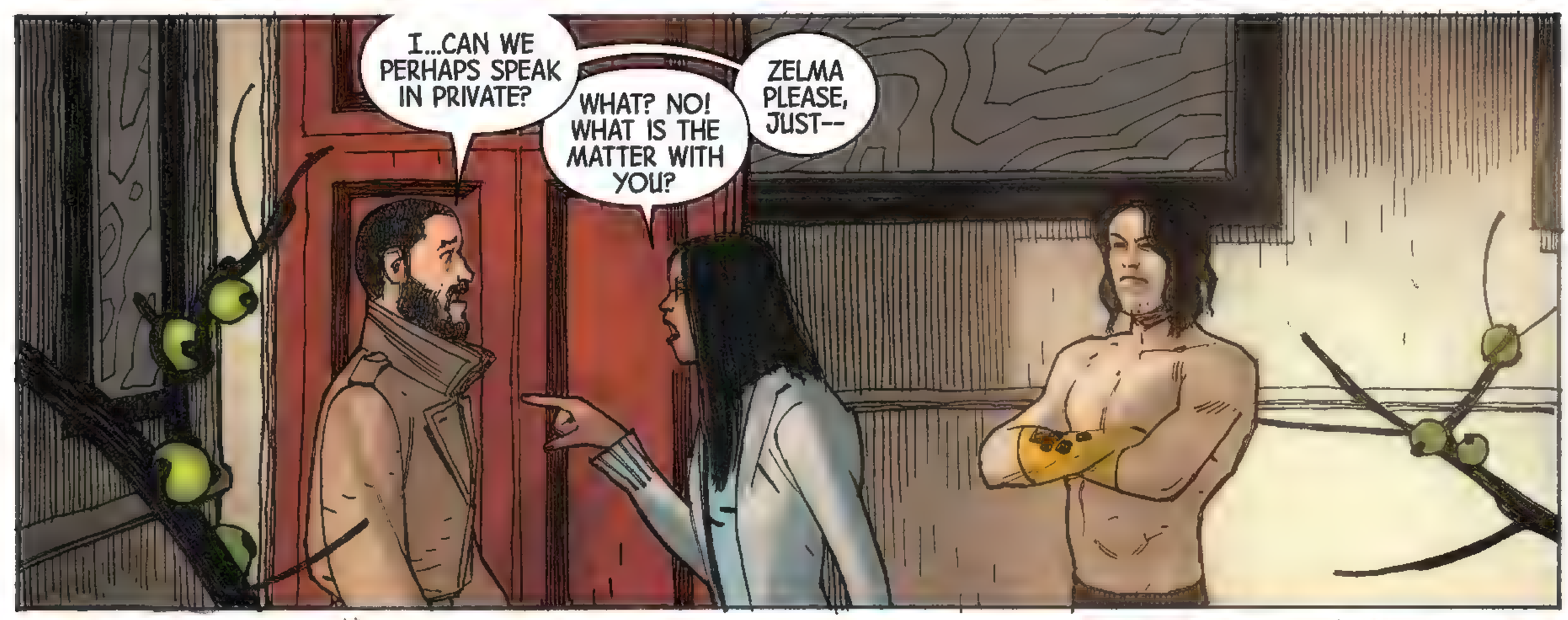
WHY, STEPHEN... WHATEVER CAN I DO FOR YOU?

HI, LOKI. I NEED TO TALK TO ZELMA. NOW.

I SEE.

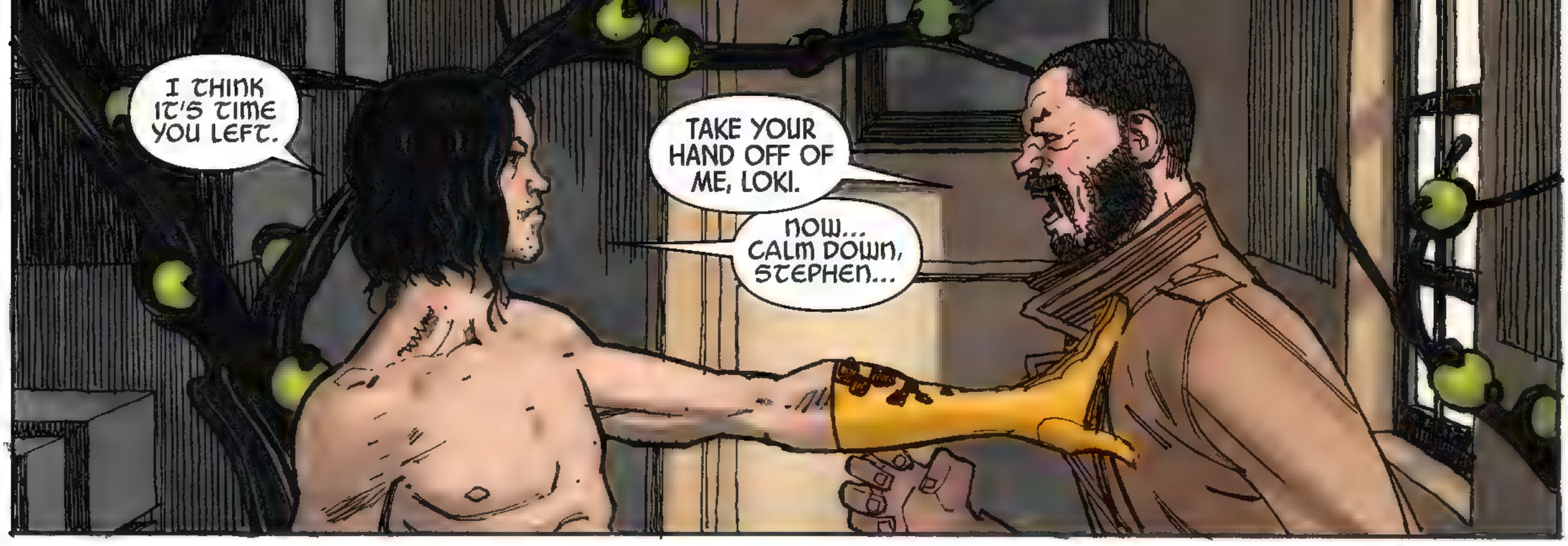
STEPHEN?!

WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?
I...ZELMA, I NEED YOU TO COME WITH ME.
EXCUSE YOU?


I...CAN WE PERHAPS SPEAK IN PRIVATE?
WHAT? NO! WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU?
ZELMA PLEASE, JUST--

YOU LEFT ME *A NOTE!*
YOU WENT AWAY TO YOUR LITTLE SORCERER TOURNAMENT, AND WHEN YOU GOT BACK YOU PACKED UP ALL OF YOUR THINGS, AND YOU LEFT ME *A NOTE!*
NO PHONE CALLS, NO FORWARDING ADDRESS...NO GOODBYES... NOTHING...
WE WERE *FRIENDS!*
DO YOU HAVE *ANY IDEA* HOW HURTFUL THAT IS??

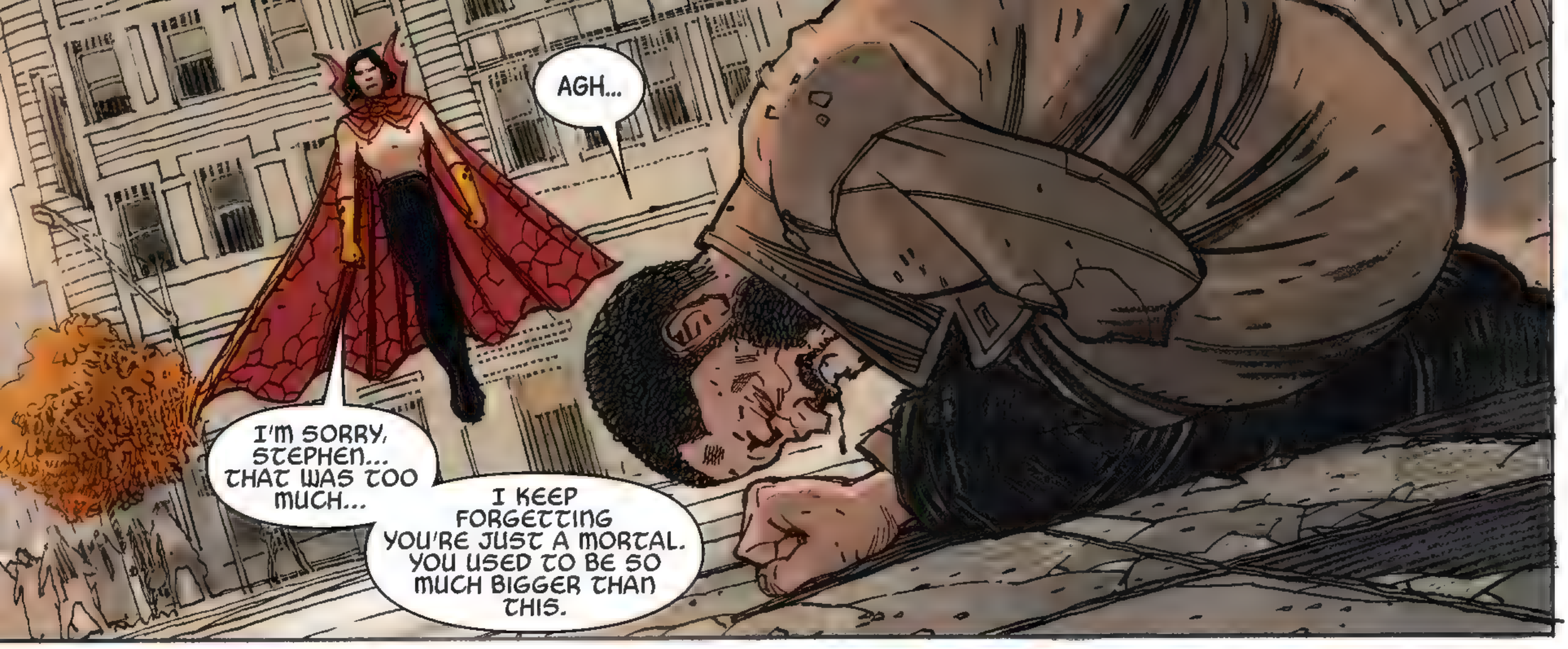
I DIDN'T REALIZE...
I'M SORRY, ZELMA. I AM. BUT I NEED YOU TO COME WITH ME. PLEASE. YOU AREN'T SAFE HERE.
HOW DARE YOU.
NO, ZELMA, WAIT!
WHOA...

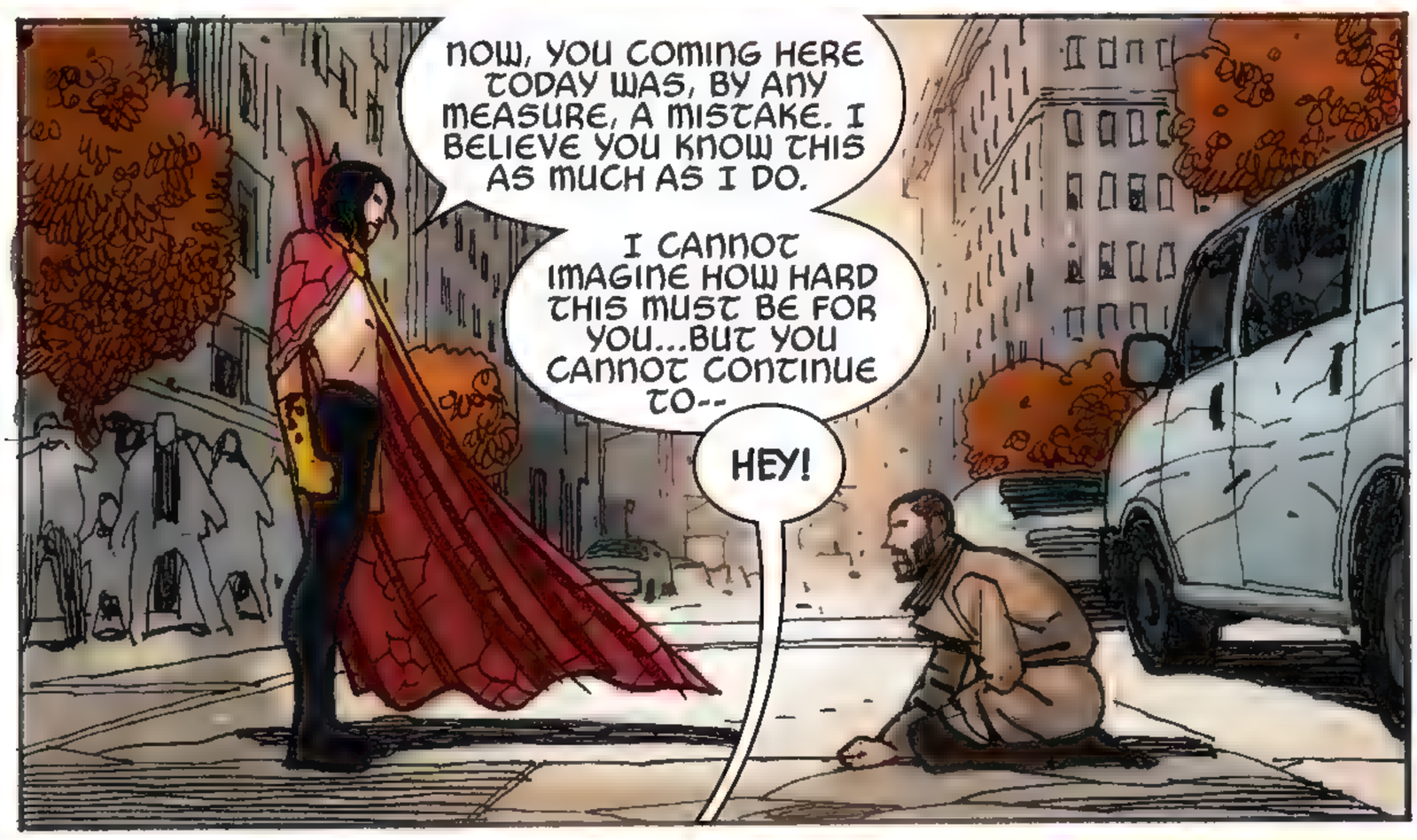

I THINK IT'S TIME YOU LEFT.
TAKE YOUR HAND OFF OF ME, LOKI.
NOW... CALM DOWN, STEPHEN...

I SAID--

VWAMM

BOOM


AGH...
I'M SORRY, STEPHEN... THAT WAS TOO MUCH...
I KEEP FORGETTING YOU'RE JUST A MORTAL. YOU USED TO BE SO MUCH BIGGER THAN THIS.


NOW, YOU COMING HERE TODAY WAS, BY ANY MEASURE, A MISTAKE. I BELIEVE YOU KNOW THIS AS MUCH AS I DO.
I CANNOT IMAGINE HOW HARD THIS MUST BE FOR YOU...BUT YOU CANNOT CONTINUE TO--
HEY!

YOU GET AWAY FROM MY FRIEND, YA LOUSY #$%&!

STEPHEN, HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING ANIMALS TO TALK?
BATS, CALM DOWN...

COME ON, YA @#$%! I DON'T CARE HOW BIG YA ARE! YA THINK YOU CAN JUST GO AROUND ZAPPIN' PEOPLE AND HIDIN' BEHIND MAGIC FORCE FIELDS?!
COME ON, YA BIG CREEP!

NOW, STEPHEN, WHY DID YOU COME HERE TOD--
LOKI, TAKE IT DOWN. TAKE THE BARRIER DOWN! NOW!
I'M NOT HURTING THE ANIMAL, STEPHEN. IT'S MERELY TO KEEP IT AT BAY WHILE WE--
HE HAS A WEAK HEART!

YOU, THINK YOU CAN →AGH← I AIN'T--I AIN'T DONE WITH YOU YET, CREEP... I...
AH, AH, HELL...

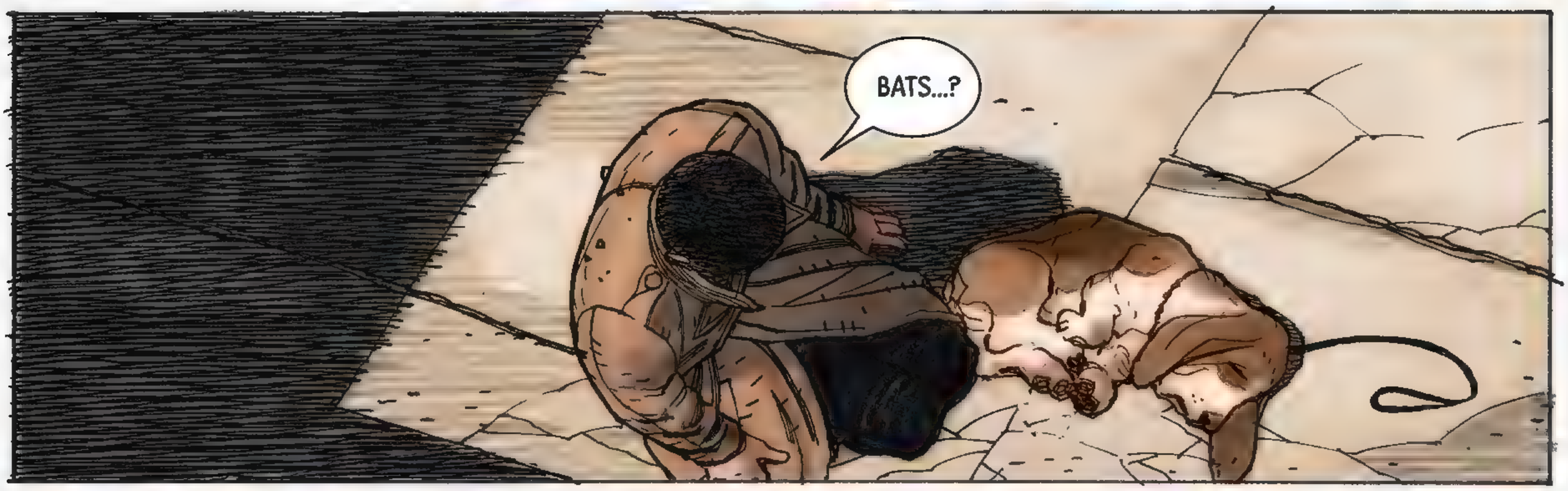
BATS!
DOC...DOC, SUMTHIN' AIN'T...

I...STEPHEN, I DIDN'T MEAN TO...

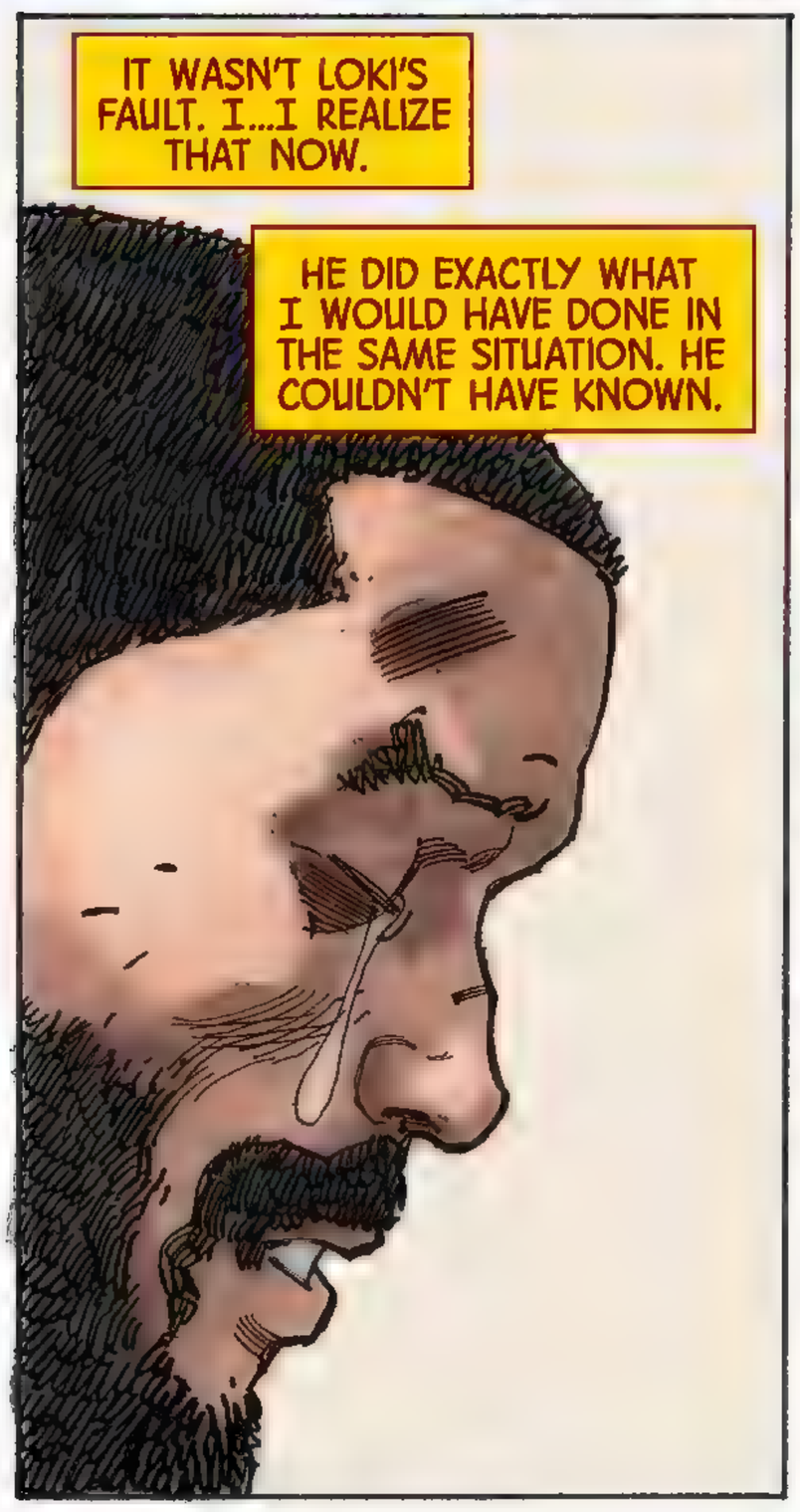
YOU NEVER MEAN TO DO ANYTHING, DO YOU, LOKI?!
DOC...

HEY, JUST BREATHE, BUDDY. WE'RE GOING TO GET YOU TO THE--
DON'T... DON'T LET HIM...

DON'T EVER LET NO ONE HURT YER FRIENDS.


BATS...?

BATS!
I'm... I--


IT WASN'T LOKI'S FAULT. I...I REALIZE THAT NOW.
HE DID EXACTLY WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE IN THE SAME SITUATION. HE COULDN'T HAVE KNOWN.

BUT AT THE TIME I WAS SO ANGRY...I HAD LOST EVERYTHING...
I AM...NOT ACCUSTOMED TO LOSING...

SO, IT'S ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT MY RESPONSE TO ALL OF THIS...

AGH!

...WAS PERHAPS A TAD DISPROPORTIONATE.

AND YET...MY FEELINGS ABOUT LOKI ASIDE...THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE *STILL HUNG IN THE BALANCE...*

JUST...TRY TO KEEP THAT IN MIND WHEN YOU SEE WHAT I'VE DONE.

WHAT IN GOD'S NAME ARE YOU DOING HERE, STEPHEN?

I NEED YOUR HELP.

NO. NO, YOU SWORE TO ME! ARE Y-YOU INSANE?!

PLEASE CALM DOWN...

I WOULDN'T HAVE COME IF THIS WEREN'T DIRE. PLEASE JUST LISTEN TO ME. THERE IS--

NO! YOU--YOU KNOW I CAN'T DO ANYTHING...T-THE COST...YOU KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I--

HEY...THAT IS NOT TRUE ANYMORE. WE *FIXED THAT.*

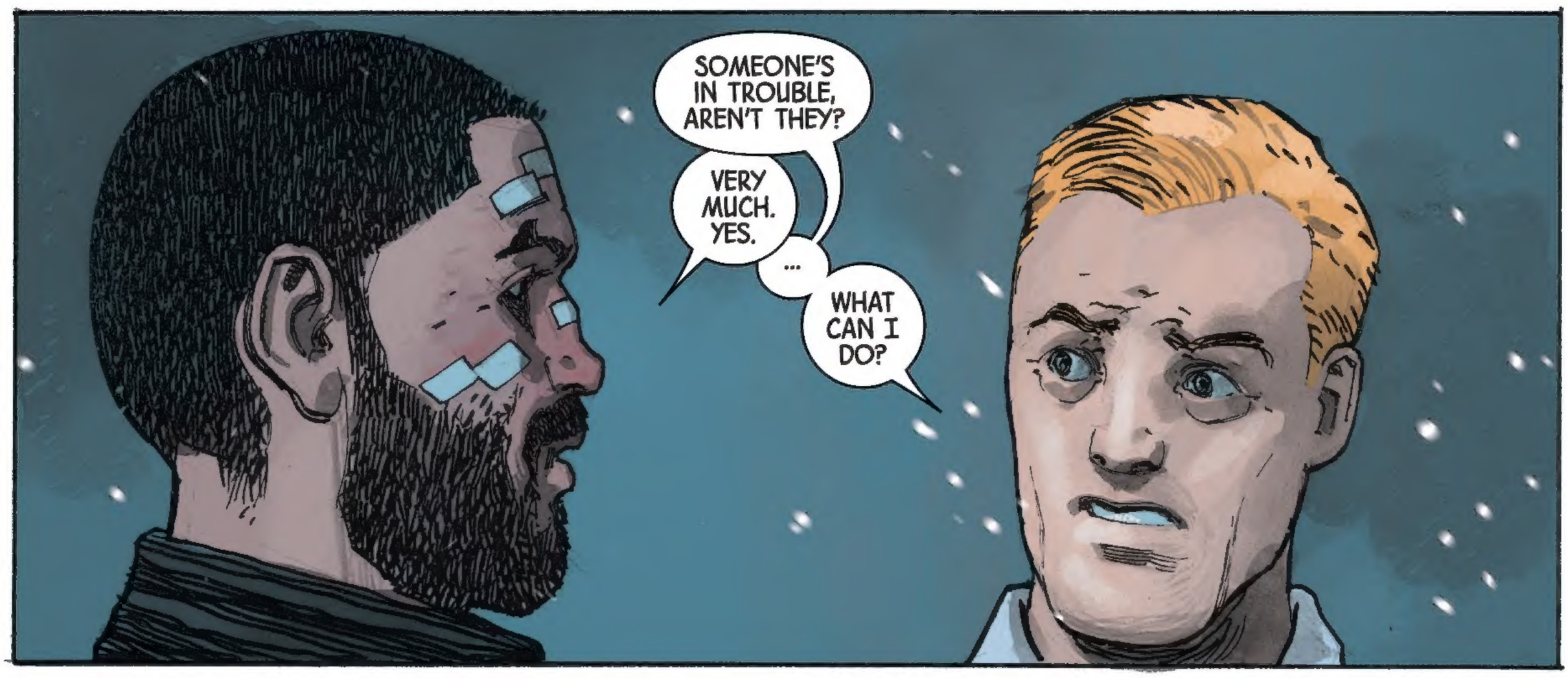
I FIXED YOU.

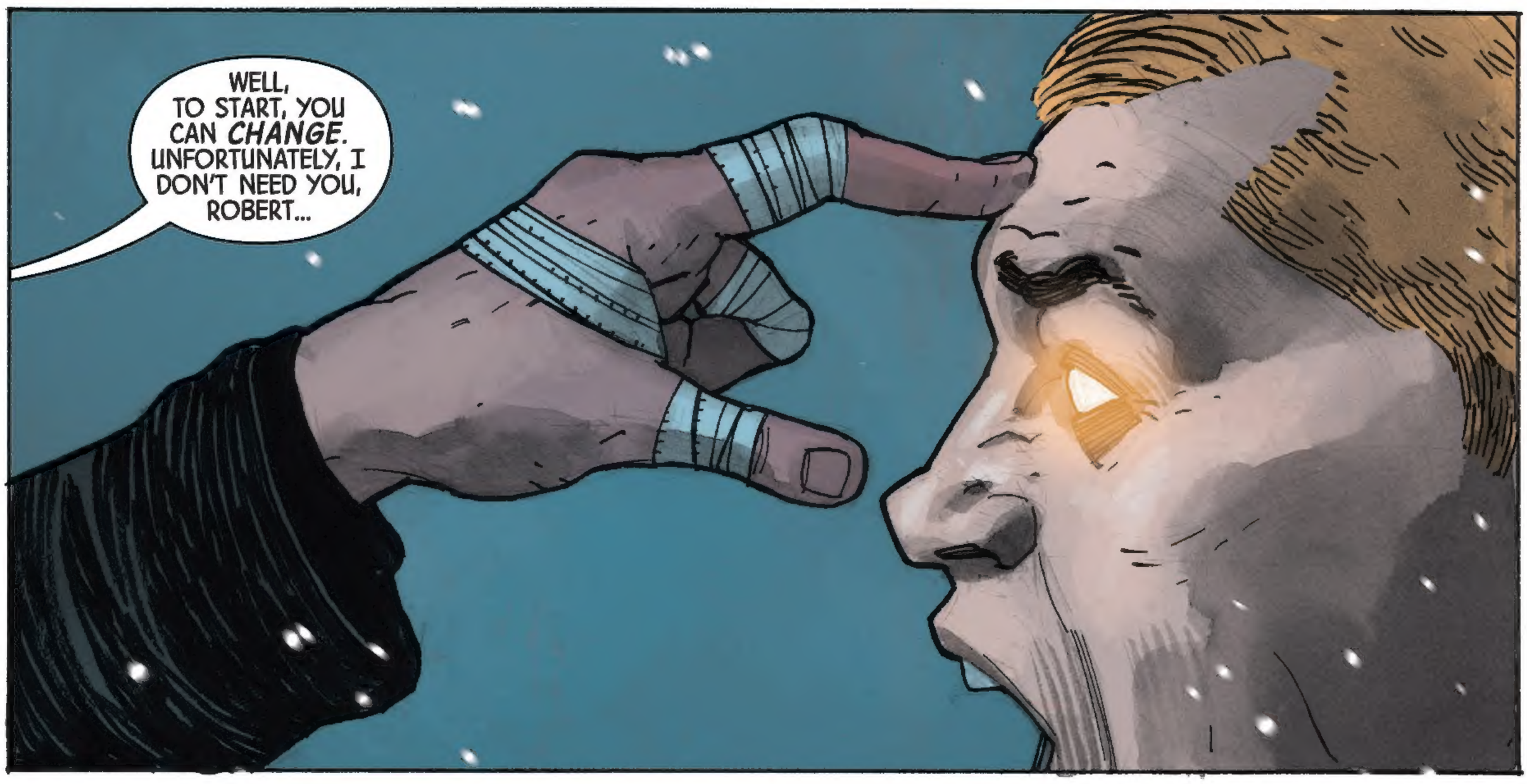
THAT'S W-WHAT THEY ALWAYS SAY.

BUT THIS IS MY HOME NOW...
I BUILT THIS PLACE FOR YOU. IT ISN'T REAL--YOU KNOW THAT. IT'S INSIDE YO--
WE'RE IN MY HEAD. I KNOW THAT, STEPHEN.

I'M NOT CRAZY.

NO. NO, YOU'RE NOT.
NOT ANYMORE.


SOMEONE'S IN TROUBLE, AREN'T THEY?
VERY MUCH. YES.
...
WHAT CAN I DO?


WELL, TO START, YOU CAN *CHANGE*. UNFORTUNATELY, I DON'T NEED YOU, ROBERT...

I NEED
THE
SENTRY
TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT: THE TALE OF THE TOURNAMENT AND MORE! **#383** ON SALE IN DECEMBER!

VERSUS

ASGARD!

ZONE